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**DEP MARKS EARTH WEEK BY TAKING STEPS TO REDUCE IMPACTS
OF PHOSPHORUS ON WATERWAYS**

(08/26) TRENTON – The Department of Environmental Protection is taking significant steps toward improving the health of New Jersey’s lakes, rivers and streams by reducing the impacts of phosphorus, a nutrient that degrades water quality, Commissioner Lisa P. Jackson announced today in marking Earth Week

“Thanks to decades of hard work and strong laws, our waterways have come a long way since the first Earth Day in 1970, but runoff pollution remains a threat to the overall ecological health of our lakes, rivers and streams,” Commissioner Jackson said. “These measures, including a pledge by the fertilizer industry to reduce or eliminate phosphorus in lawn-care products, place New Jersey among the nation’s leaders in combating this type of pollution.”

During an Earth Week event at a West Windsor home-improvement center, Commissioner Jackson signed a memorandum of understanding with members of the lawn-care industry, who pledged to reduce the amount of phosphorus released by fertilizers in the Garden State by 50 percent by 2010.

The industry will make fertilizers available to retail centers that have no phosphorus or reduced amounts of phosphorus. The industry will conduct public education programs on proper use of fertilizers and will label products accordingly.

Commissioner Jackson also formally signed off on science-based standards that will greatly reduce phosphorus discharged as wastewater and stormwater in two heavily developed watersheds in northeastern New Jersey.

Nutrients such as phosphorus are essential to plants and animals, but too much fosters excessive algae growth, impairing water quality, diminishing recreational experiences, making treatment of drinking water more costly, and depriving water of dissolved oxygen that fish and other aquatic life need.

Algae growth has been problematic in the highly developed Passaic River and Pompton Lake-Ramapo River watersheds of northeastern New Jersey.

The DEP formally adopted water-quality criteria for this basin based on the amount of phosphorus the river systems can naturally assimilate. The criteria, known as total maximum daily loads, affect more than 50 sewage treatment plants.

In signing the memorandum of agreement, members of the Lawn Care Product Manufacturing Industry, including Lebanon Seaboard and United Industries, agreed to establish technical groups to work with the DEP and Rutgers University's Agricultural Experiment Station in developing a stewardship program to foster better public education and to review strategies to reduce the levels of phosphorus in fertilizers.

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